

STAY FROSTY / “Shakespeare Said That”

By [Jacob Clifton](#) | Season 1 | Episode 6 | Aired on 08.17.2008

CA fully runs up and stabs a guy for no reason, but luckily he hits up in a non-body part, because he's so fucked up and weird. Meanwhile, Walt is still sad and freaked out by the fact that guns kill people. Not even Espera's Generation Kill speeches -- or Ray makin' out on him and humping his head -- seem to cheer him up. On the other end of the spectrum, Trombley gets to be called "Whopper Jr." now, because he's a Baby Killer. Needless to say, he thinks this is very cool. It's actually not.

Ferrando tells the Platoon Companies that Dowdy, having achieved his mission of getting them into Al Kut, was relieved of his command and his bullets. Why? Don't know. Even Godfather admits he's a good man who achieved his goals. The problem was? Questioning (stupid, bad, wrong, wickedly selfish and self-aggrandizing) orders.

Encino Man decides that this horrible decision by Mattis was actually a coded message to him that he should make Nate Fick's life even more irritating. Everybody simultaneously discovers a surfeit of naked Iraqis everywhere; their clothes having been jacked by The Republican Guard. Nate and Brad discuss how they're now going to be taking Baghdad somehow with Humvees, which freaks everybody out -- although not as much as all their diarrhea. What's worse than diarrhea is Casey Kasem, though, who is now just openly leveraging Nate against Encino Man's favor. It's gross. Nate explains to him how gross he's being and why, and Casey Kasem goes away again.

So then while everybody's walking dead because they have this horrible throwing-up-while-having-diarrhea disease (and have been on the road forever and are broken), a billion fugeez show up and get herded down a road by the Humvees. Literally herded. One chick is like, "Um, thanks so much for 'helping' me walk down a road at gunpoint in my own country, that's awesome of you. I'm from Baghdad, which you're bombing to the stone age, so thanks for that too." They talk about how hot she is -- she is -- and she's like, "No, you can't have my number. Because you blew up my phone."

Somebody accidentally shoots a dude in the head with a blue smoke bomb. Nate manages to listen to Brad talk about his Warrior Spirit without laughing, and gets excited that the war might be ending. Then they pee. It's just one in a series of very serious, very intimate speeches that Brad goes around giving people because he honestly thinks the war is going to end. He's even more awesome every second that goes by.

Captain America tries desperately from inside his craziness to communicate with Fick, but it doesn't work out so well. Godfather manages to get First Recon into a mission to Baqubah, north of Baghdad. Which is even worse because they're dealing with those reservist jerks from Delta Company, whose awfulness some random dude explains at length. Captain America manages to break down in tears on comms, so he's doing well.

Kocher takes some prisoners -- good -- and then gets accused of prisoner abuse -- bad. Needless to say, Captain America is actually the freak who's to blame. Garza trades out his bike helmet for an Iraqi one, which causes the Delta freaks to fire on Bravo Two, because they are idiots. Fick makes a new friend and gets a little kiss, then reminds everybody not to do any war crimes. Bravo ends up Oscar Mike into Baghdad, with prisoners in tow but no particular mission as far as they're aware.

Platoon Three's patrolling -- you can spot them by the set of Captain America's mouth -- when Kocher spots a guy taking a crap, and starts yelling in Arabic. They're

closing on the guy when Captain America comes running over a berm, screaming, and crashes into them, dropping the guy and the Marines on the ground. He stabs at him with a knife, again and again. It's a pile. Captain America keeps screaming. They wrestle Captain America away, and pull the guy up off the ground. They finally stop the fight, and Kocher's once again amazed. "Jesus, Eric. I thought that hajji was killing you. I fucked his shit up good, didn't I?" Somebody pulls the knife out of the guy's ammo magazine, shaking his head. "Better luck next time, sir..." There is the suggestion, once again, that Captain America's hamster has fallen off its wheel. I think the hamster must be as fucked in the head as Captain America. They wander away from the scene, and Captain America laughs nervously as usual. He's like a faulty jack in the box that just needs to explode, because that's what he's been designed to do.

Walt is weary. Ray and Brad watch RCT-1 blowing up Al Kut while they sit with their hands tied. Brad reminds everybody around that Kocher's team is patrolling the zone, so don't engage on the left beyond eleven o'clock. He cuts the world in half, right, but more importantly: that's what you do when your guys are out in front of you. You figure out where they are, and you don't shoot them. Right? Eric drives up with his prisoner tied up on his hood, takes him in for field interrogation. He quietly reassures Captain America that it's going to be reported as his snatch, I guess because it's no skin off his ass. Or it could be that whatever tales the guy tells, Captain America should be the main character. I'm not sure Captain America gets it either: he stares at nothing, weirder and crazier than usual.

Day. Eckloff and Godfather get off a chopper, coming back from a meeting with Mattis, and address the Platoon leadership. "As of 0915 hours forward elements of Colonel Dowdy's regiment seized the main bridge over the Tigris river in Al Kut. As you know, I just returned from a meeting with General Mattis. What you don't know is that shortly after Dowdy led his regiment into Al Kut, General Mattis relieved him of his command." Casey Kasem stares, because like Godfather this is the thing he understands: punishment/reward. Leadership for its own sake; the natural choreography of smoke and mirrors that says the violence of action is better than tactical surgery. Maneuver warfare. The thing about broadcasting static is that all you hear is static, too. They cut the world in half.

"And gentlemen, Colonel Dowdy was also relieved of the ammo for his sidearm." Godfather pauses, reveling in the drama as usual; this pause is maneuver warfare too. "Colonel Dowdy was a good man, but he did not fully embrace maneuver warfare. And lest we forget, maneuver warfare is America's warfare for the 21st century. It is all about the violence of action. With First Recon at the tip of the spear, seven thousand Marines have just completed the corps' longest march since the Barbary campaign against Tripoli in 1803. Actually, some of you are riding in the same Humvees they used." They laugh, he earned it. "Through our use of maneuver, we have tied down many times our number of the enemy's force, opening the door for the army to invade the enemy capital from the west." Right, what Sun Tzu called The Old I'm-Not-Touching-You Approach. Godfather keeps talking about the violence of action, this is what he's talking about. And there's a place for that, in a

well-designed, well-formed war. But it doesn't take the place of it. Captain America comes running up at you, stabbing you in the chest, screaming hysterically out of nowhere? That's maneuver warfare too.

"Sir," asks Encino Man, because he got stuck on something a few minutes ago and isn't really listening, "Does this mean it's the end of our mission?" Ferrando doesn't know. "But the First Marine Division is positioning itself on the outskirts of Baghdad for the assault, and we will be there. Rest assured, Godfather will find a mission for this Battalion. But what I want to leave you with today is this: Colonel Dowdy did succeed this morning. He did lead his men into Al Kut. But General Mattis has a long memory. He did not forget that at critical moments Dowdy hesitated to execute orders." Sometimes things that don't make sense, have to make sense. So they make sense. Sometimes you get smacked for winning.

The natural response to that which is screwby is to pick a side and stand by it, because you can't live in the in-between places: if this show is about anything, it's about the mental laziness of picking a side and sticking with it. Rejecting that which is screwby because you don't want to think about both sides at once. But life is in itself screwby, which means that any time you pick a side, you're going to be wrong half the time. It's natural, just like murder and perversion and everything else society and culture created to stop, but I would say the duty is to remember that nothing resolves. You're always going to be in a position where you can't combine the opposites, where you have to somehow be in line with both. War and peace. Justice and mercy. Good and evil. It's so fucking lazy, but we all do it. And once you've chosen your side, it's truly amazing how all the evidence lines up to demonstrate how right you are.

Some of us do it because we're just not that intelligent. Godfather chooses maneuver warfare and ass-kissing; complete subservience. Some of us do it because it suits our natural inclinations. Casey Kasem chooses to see the world in terms of reward/punish; loyalty/destruction. Some of us do it because we've been doing it our whole lives. Captain America looks into the screwby abyss and chooses to become as crazy as what he's looking at; Trombley's life under fire is no less screwby than his life back home was. Once you start looking at things in black and white, you have to choose one. You cut the world in half: "And gentlemen, Ferrando has a long memory too." Godfather wanders away, wondering if he's created just the right sequence of words to bring everybody into alignment with his own lazy, hazy philosophy; he wanders away like a pants-shitting Alzheimer's patient.

"Gunny," Encino Man murmurs, "That stuff about the General's memory and Dowdy being relieved, was Godfather talking about us in there?" Godfather wasn't fucking talking about anything at all in there. He was telling the story of the world as it's occurring to him. He was spouting off, tossing out random threats in the hopes that it would scare each of you as much as the authority of Chaos and the screwby chaos of authority scare him. It looks like whatever you want it to look like. For Casey Kasem, what Ferrando was saying is that Encino Man needs to punish Nate, because coincidentally that's just what Casey Kasem wants to do.

Nate and Gunny Wynn share a happy little moment about providing for their men: the new MREs have milkshakes in them, and it made the boys smile. Wynn reminds Nate to get Walt's report on that civilian that he shot last week. "We've got to take care of this ass-covering bullshit. It'll be good for Hasser too. He does his duty, gets back to being a Marine." They watch him, the place that he's in; Nate thanks Mike for nagging him. Over where they're sitting, under Nate and Wynn's watchful eyes, Ray can't help but be attracted to Walt's ongoing anguish. Ray is a funny old bird, because he's like the middle child of the Platoon. If there needs to be a distraction, he'll provide it. If a blister needs popping, he'll pop it. He has no idea where the love ends and the hate starts: he's a warrior, like a moth that goes toward the fire. So the mere fact that Walt has a little thought bubble coming out of his head and inside it there's a picture of a man with no eye and half a face, that's enough to pull Ray across the entire camp like a bullet pointed at Walt's head, because it throws off the kilter of the entire platoon and Ray can feel this like a storm in the air. Same as the dickless bullshit at the end of the episode and all the racist homophobic stuff, they all let off the steam when the steam builds up, but for most of them it's just maneuver warfare against the anxiety of their position. Ray does it like a surgeon and he doesn't even know it, and that's why Brad and Nate love him so much: they can see him doing it.

Like right now. If you asked Ray *why* he's humping the back of Walt's head, he would say it was for fun, or because Walt is a fag or something, but that's not it at all: it's because he can't stand to see Walt hurting. "Feel the love," he says, bouncing off the back of his head. Walt shoves him off and spits out some rage. "Finally, he speaks," says Ray, letting milkshake dribble out of his mouth and down his face. And that, my friend, is maneuver warfare: the left hand moving so fast you can't see what the right hand is doing. Ray's the master of it. Brad says it was better when they were starving, because at least Ray wasn't drooling food all over his face. Nate kneels near Walt and speaks softly. "Walt. Finish your report and get it to me ASAP. You did nothing wrong. But we're gonna see if there's a better way to stop these cars." But Brad's already got the nurturing side well in hand anyway, and that's not how it's going to get solved, and Ray knows that too: "Walt's got a great way, LT. Shoot the driver, stop the car." Walt is sad, but Nate smiles behind his eyes. Ray's going to keep poking the blister until it pops, watch.

Brad gives Trombley the phone and takes Nate aside. "Sir, it's vital. Hasser will write his way clear, but we're fast becoming an army of occupation. We can't just shoot these civilians like we're doing." Nate's aware of the screwby: "Marines aren't cops, Brad. We're an aggressive force. That said, we'll see what we can do." And all around, the chorus is mounting up, following Ray's lead. Espera looks directly at it. "Hey, fuck it, Walt. These hajji motherfuckers are trying to kill us. I'm for lighting up every motherfucker that comes within a hundred meters." Brad and Nate look at each other, wondering how long the good-cop/bad-cop will take before Walt moves out of the grave he's in.

Explosions interrupt; Trombley curses. "Didn't we kick their asses already?" Brad and Nate break and Ray is impressed at the tenacity. "This is really interesting, Brad.

You know, Iraqis don't really seem good at fighting, but then they never really completely surrender either." Brad tells him to shut up and dig in, and Ray almost grins. "So I can be more like the teacher's pet?" No, of course not. Trombley's the one thing Ray hasn't figured out, and he will never figure it out, because he can't fathom that somebody would be Trombley without making a conscious decision to be Trombley, because when Ray is Trombley he's making a decision to do it. "Yeah, that's exactly it," scoffs Brad. "You should be more like Trombley." Ray is incensed. "More like Trombley?" He becomes even more awesome than ever before, leaning into the window of the Hummer: "MORE LIKE TROMBLEY?" His eyes bug out with the insult. The Marines everywhere laugh at this latest admission of the screwby, and begin cheering: "Whopper Junior! Whopper Junior! Whopper Junior!" If you can't handle it and you can't stop it, you might as well celebrate it. Walt, disgusted, walks away; Brad calls his name helplessly. He's left his SAW against a stone.

Nate comes around on Doc Bryan forcing Brunmeier to drink water. He tells Nate that half the guys in the platoon have the horrifically named "ass to mouth disease." That is a screwby I cannot reconcile. A few meters away Manimal drops a case of grenades and everybody jumps. "See?" somebody asks. "That's why we can't have nice things." Celebrate it: "Fucking hick."

Encino Man calls a meeting with Nate; asks him if he's heard about RCT-1. "General Mattis shitcanned Colonel Dowdy." Nate doesn't know what this means to Encino Man, or more properly to Casey Kasem, so he keeps quiet. "Colonel wasn't a team player. Godfather said we should all play on the team." Casey Kasem fills in the blanks: "If it can happen to a full bird Colonel, it can happen to anyone." Subtle. Encino Man reiterates. "Nate. So you know, there will be no more questioning of my orders." Still not the point, or good, or war. "Respectfully, sir, I've only tried to interpret your intent to the best of my ability," Nate says to a blank and uncomprehending Encino Man. Captain America arrives for the meeting and Encino Man engages in a little maneuver warfare of his own. "Here comes the warrior on our team. Outstanding work last night taking down that EPW." Yeah, that was awesome how you stabbed a guy in the chest for taking a dump. "Just doing my job," says Captain America, because he knows the official report is nothing like reality, because reality doesn't make sense and never did. "Looks like he put up quite a fight," Encino Man says, just in case you were wondering how plugged in he is to the backchannel chatter.

"A fight like that tells me the company took in a high value asset," says Casey Kasem, happy to go by the report and not the reality. "He did not want to surrender." No, taking a crap without getting the hell pounded and stabbed out of him was a bit higher on the list. "While your platoon has been busy shooting civilians at roadblocks, Bravo Three was taking in live prisoners." Nate is too classy to even exist in the same world as Casey Kasem: "I heard. Good work, Dave." Kocher arrives with the fake report and Nate reads it. "This'll be handy if we write your platoon up for a commendation," says Encino Man, because after all that's the point. Casey Kasem reiterates how awesome it was that Captain America was there to stab the

guy for doing nothing, and Kocher finally speaks up: "If you want to believe that, sir..." Nate interrupts, because of them all he's the most on top of thinking both sides at once, because he is neither stupid nor lazy, and knows there's no point in letting Kocher air his grievances to the unsympathetic and frankly incapable of comprehending: "-- Sir. What was the reason for this meeting?" Back on track, Encino Man doesn't really have a good reason. "Right. Battalion says we're moving on." Casey Kasem is disgusting: "That's ASAP, Lieutenant." Okay, douche. They walk away and Kocher protests that he was about to speak truth to power. "Yeah, but no. Not the right time." It never will be. When Nate says he's ready for the war to be over, that's what he means.

Driving. Evan asks Trombley, why they were calling him Whopper Junior, and Trombley grins excitedly. "They were calling me that?" Evan's weirded out by this answer since, you know, he was standing right there, but he just shakes his head and laughs, because who wants to talk to Trombley, ever, once he demonstrates he doesn't know what you're talking about. "Ray? Why were they calling him that?" Ray shrugs, that eloquent November Juliet shrug, and Evan knows he's lying. Ray spots some guys on foot and Brad calls it in. "Interrogative: do they have weapons? Hostile intent?" The men are roadside, naked, milling about, confused and scared. "They got *naked* intent..." says Ray, intrigued. Brad reminds Trombley to get ready for trouble, and yells at the distracted Walt to pull it together. "Man, it looks like we caught these guys in the act trying to change their uniforms," Ray says. They stand with the men, kneeling, trying to piece the story together. The men say that they've been robbed of their clothes and gasoline by real Republican Guard, but now that everybody looks the same it could be the other way. Elsewhere, Espera is dealing with another group of guys in their boxers.

Rudy locates a small pile of executed bodies that suggest the guys' story is true; Ray breaks the tension by screaming about one of the guys: "Be careful of the one on the right! He's got a horse cock like Manimal's. You don't want to get that thing angry!" Meesh thinks the dudes are telling the truth; one of them yells at Espera while the rest shush him and Christopher looks nervously on. "Americans, you win battle, beat Saddam's army. Now his army beat us. What you do? Again shushing: They rob us. What do you do?" Nothing, of course. Espera tries to chill them out: "Listen, this is something you're gonna have to... You have to take it up with the UN. Okay? Just stay back from the road. And you don't have to wave your T-shirts around anymore, all right?" He hands them water; Gabe comes running up grinning with an Iraqi helmet to replace the one he lost. "Fits good. How do I look?" Espera makes him smile: "Like a target."

That night at a team leader meeting, Nate's playing the queasiest, screwbiest game yet. "What we did, running and gunning through those towns, the good stuff and the bad was all part of the plan. Of all the Marines in the First Division, the General selected us to be the instrument of long range strategy. We led the feint to Al Kut. We tied down two Iraqi divisions, saved untold numbers of US soldiers. You should be proud." Gabe asks, of course, why they didn't go into Al Kut, and Nate looks

directly at him as he tells the new lie. "Gabe, the General's plan wasn't about taking the city. It was about making the Iraqis think we were gonna take it. To be clear, the Commander's intent was never to take it. The focus has always been Baghdad." He is, as they say, assured of this. Gabe's just like, "So we took the wrong turn and now we're fucked, and so revisionist is Godfather's bullshit self that it's erased from our memories too?" Nate's like, "Quit with the pre-*Crisis* take on things and join us here on Earth-2. None of that ever happened. This is the story." He changes the subject to Gabe's new helmet, which he's painted Marine camo. "Sergeant Major Sixta made me ditch the bike helmet," he says, to a chorus of laughter.

Nate asks about Brad's team's combat effectiveness, and Brad notes that Ray is having allergies, but nobody has the shitting disease. "Leon and Lilley both have it, but they're still doing their job, sir," reports Espera. Team Two is out, though, and Three is almost as bad. "Looks like we'll be nursing this platoon all the way into Baghdad," says Nate. Brad and Espera doubt they'll even see the Baghdad assault: "You don't use Humvees to attack an urban center." Ray points out that you don't use them to strong-point a city either, but they did. Ray is comfortable with the bullshit because Ray is a nihilist because Ray is a genius. "Maybe they'll hook us up, sir, let us guard some of Saddam's money in one of those palaces," Espera says. Ray just hopes that they get to fuck up more shit before the war ends. Gabe hopes for Baghdad.

Casey Kasem stands on the perimeter, looking desperately for some bullshit to pull; he locates a dead tank that poses no threat whatsoever and decides to throw a shit-fit about it. Doc and Rudy are back caring for Brunmeier when he runs up screaming about the tank that poses no threat whatsoever. They try to explain to him that it's already been blown up sufficiently, and also that they are all shitting their guts out, but Casey Kasem is a malicious idiot with power, which are three things that often come together. "Reyes! What kind of team leader are you, not checking out an enemy tank on your perimeter?" Rudy knows the game, and offers -- since his entire team is half dead -- to do it himself. "No, you put the hammer to your team. Like Godfather says, malingering spreads like a yeast infection unless you nip it in the bud." Looking at the men who are lying on the dirt, sweating and puking in their own shit, he says this. Doc points out that the men can't even walk, and Lovell asks if Nate approved this. Bad move. Casey Kasem concedes that, if the men are ill, the Corpsman should go with them. On the pointless mission to kill a dead tank. And also that Doc should shut up, because he's the one swinging pipe. I don't think I've ever been this pissed at anything that has happened on this show, even though it's just the same old shit in a new uniform. Lovell tells Rudy that, since his team is slightly less sick than Rudy's, they'll do it.

One member of the team falls on his face, puking, before they even reach the tank. The thing's got like fucking moss grown on it. "Doesn't even have a turret," one of them says, squelching in the mud. "Fucking cocksucker sends us into a fucking swamp to check this weak shit out." Somebody shits himself, loudly.

Casey Kasem's still up Rudy's ass when Nate comes to find out where Team Three went. "A tank? Where?" In the swamp, somebody explains. "The blown out one. Gunnery Sergeant Griego informed us that you..." Casey Kasem rewrites the story again, cutting him off before Nate can react: "They're covering your ass, Nate." Nate takes a beat to ask WTF, and Rudy retreats immediately, grateful that he doesn't have to sit there in the oily horribleness of Casey Kasem anymore. "How would it look if that tank was operational?" says Casey Kasem, even though everybody knows that's not even possible. "I'll tell you what it looks like right now. It resembles an incompetent moron climbing up the asshole of his company commander by inventing a bullshit mission. Did you seek my authority before tasking my platoon with this?" And the worst part is, he did. Nate was sleeping for the first time in thirty-six hours, and Casey Kasem woke him just enough to affirm the order, out of a sound sleep, before letting him go back down. Nate's horrified. Casey Kasem's about to come in his pants. "Get the fuck out of here. And do not ever again mess with my platoon." Chaffin and Rudy watch carefully as Casey Kasem swears he's watching Nate's back. "Fuck that. You can fuck with me all you want but do not, I repeat, do not fuck with my men. I'm putting it down, Gunny. You picking it up?" Casey Kasem goes off to suck total balls in some other location as Doc and Team Three return, puking and shitting all over themselves, apologizing.

Daytime, watching like a thousand refugees walking up a road toward them in groups of ten and twenty. Brad and Damon Fawcett watch through binoculars: it's been going on since sunrise. "The plan is for my platoon to escort these folks through our lines to the southern checkpoint," Nate explains. "Need you to let them through in blocks of forty." Brad asks why they're not being sent back to Al Kut, where the fighting's ended, and Nate explains -- to a low whistle from Brad -- that they're not from Al Kut, but Baghdad, a hundred miles away. He tells them to stay frosty, because they don't know if there are bombers in the group. "Keep your vehicles at a walking pace and -- this is important -- keep a good distance from these people." Never gonna happen. They start the slow walk.

Brad reminds the other teams again and again to keep their distance; a woman offers Gabe food. Q-Tip spits and watches; Ray starts looking at their faces. Brad calls for "my Trombley" and offers them water. They walk. Q-Tip offers them MREs from the truck; Christeson hands them bottled water. This is the blister. This is screwby: "Thank you, soldier. Thank you for letting me pass, on my own road, in my own country." Brad stares at the woman speaking; she is very beautiful. "Why are you Americans here?" Brad tells her we're helping. "You know, I come from Baghdad. It is a beautiful city and you are bombing it. This is to make my life better?" Manimal bitches about the ungrateful bitch ... until he gets a look at her. "You know, this is a very beautiful country. And our president is very stupid. Maybe you are here for liberation, I don't know. But because of oil, it feels like war of aggression." Manimal flirts with her, acknowledging the validity of her point; Brad

just shakes his head. "So much for death before dishonor." Manimal gets gross about her

Walking. Somebody hands Brad a baby and he panics, adorably. "Don't give that thing to me!" But he holds it anyway. Lovell takes one person's baggage and loads it on his truck, then he and Baptista start loading all their stuff, and then the people. "All right, now. We just turned this combat team into a hay ride." Nate and Gunny Wynn locate Doc Bryan, whose truck is full of screaming, dying babies. "Gotta keep them cool. Doesn't matter what we do here. Quarter of these babies are gonna die..." Nathan Christopher walks by, eyes red, holding another baby. "We're helping people," he says. He's out of it. Nate worries that if they get lost in "this humanitarian stuff," they'll lose combat effectiveness. "This is our future here," says Gunny Wynn, talking screwby talk, leading Nate out of it again.

At the southern roadblock, somebody shoots another blue smoke bomb toward an approaching car; the shell bounces off the road and into the back of a man's head. They scream and he falls, dead; they keep walking. "At least we gave him a Happy Meal before he died," spits Espera. "No wait, check that. Before we hit him in the head with a fucking 40 mike-mike." It's all happening too fast; it's all happening way too slow. They drive past a town full of bombed-out cars and trucks; there's an exploded US tank on the roadside. Brad says, if they died at least they died fighting a legit enemy. Ray is thrown. They keep driving. Trombley starts getting excited about shooting dogs again and Brad finally admits if they could spare the ammo, he'd let him. He tells Ray to avoid a man's head in the street; when Ray swerves they crunch over his body instead. "You just can't fucking win," Brad says. They keep driving.

Night, watching explosions in the sky over Baghdad. Brad realizes they won't be involved. "This wasn't what we trained for. I just wanted to get one real recon mission in this war. You know? Putting us in these is an affront to my warrior spirit. I'm a hunter, not a fucking truck driver corralling gun platforms." Nate reminds him of actual history. "Brad, we were the fucking first boots on the ground in the American invasion of Mesopotamia. And you got your men out alive. Might be sad about not getting your mission but for me, I got to tell you, I'm glad this is over." He tells him the POG camp they're stuck in has real latrines, which makes them both giddy. "That's my recon mission then." Somewhere else, Manimal is on the radio. "Manimal, you're no longer allowed to touch the handset again," somebody says. "...Yeah, you're right." Heh.

Brad visits One Bravo and Espera grins at him. "I put my babies down." His team's all around, in graves and on the truck, sleeping soundly. Brad, now that he can think, has all kinds of shit to say to everybody. "I want you to know you've done good, Tony. You earned a lot of reputation in the recon community as my ATL. You've always had my six. I just want you to know I really appreciate that. And it's been..." Espera's not there yet, he's tweaking. "Do you realize the shit that we've done here,

the people we've killed? Back in the civilian world, Dog, if we did this, we would go to prison." Brad tells him to stop thinking like a Mexican and think like a white man: "Over there, they'll be laying on the medals for what we did." Lilley, not sleeping, stands up, pulling his shit together. "I'm tweaking, bro. Don't feel right unless I'm strapped. I'm gonna go pull guard duty." Brad keeps walking through the camp and runs into Godfather, who nods stupidly about how Division thinks First Recon is "slaying dragons," but agrees with Brad's unspoken complaint that they need to move. "Tanks are gonna lead the way into Baghdad, but we want to get in the game too. Be advised, Brad. Stay frosty."

Evan's asleep and drooling next day, when he's awoken by the cacophony of Manimal and Chaffin being disgusting trash. There's a female Marine on the back of a truck, watching boredly as they fuck the air and scream like bastards. "I got her right in front of me! Show me those titties! Come on, baby! I got 15 large! Give me one ass cheek! Liberated bitch, I'm gonna hit that shit." Chaffin says he's wearing desert goggles: "That ain't nothing but a piece of nappy haired Whiskey Tango... She be wearing kevlar panties nailed on top of a concertina wire bush." Manimal offers to perform reconnaissance on said bush. I am so tired of these people. "Can you imagine the stank on that cunt?" says Chaffin, and Manimal says that indeed he can. "That is exactly why I'm going! Sir, I'm gonna go down on her like she got all of Saddam's WMDs just buried right between her legs." They laugh and watch him act like a complete retard with all the sexual maturity of a five-year-old junkyard dog. He pretends to perform cunnilingus on his gas mask, and prepares to run at the woman and harass her more personally. Sixta walks up. I never wanted to see him so bad in my life.

"Belays that, Devil Dog! You's a squealin' like a bunch of butt-fucked Vassar bitches! Unfuck yourselves or we gonna suffer the spectacle of a WM with a bunch of horny Devil Dogs trailin' their stern. Get yourselves squared up here. Corporal, you're inappropriatin' your chemical filtration device by attemptin' fornication wit' it! Jesus, do I have to tell you not to desecrate your mask with perversions?" Word. It is a sign of exhaustion that I can appreciate Sixta so much right now. Elsewhere, though, Ray is being equally awesome: "Fuckin' Sixta. No sooner do we stop getting shot at, the motherfucker is out here lifing us in his illiterate fucking retardese." Q-Tip quotes some more unrelated rap lyrics because that's like his entire personality.

So you've got Ray, who deals with the screwby by talking about it all the time, poking it, reminding people not to get too comfortable on one side of the line or the other. You've got Q-Tip and Trombley, who understand that sometimes the smartest thing you can do is pretend you're in a video game. You got Captain America, who just wants to fit into the horror movie his life has turned into, and you've got Nate Fick who wrongly assumes that everybody understands what he's saying and not just taking his irony at face value. But what about Brad? How does Brad do the screwby? Brad, who's too smart to give in and too hard and scary to be normal, who sees every single thing and can only make a joke about it half the time. What do weapons do when not in use? What do you do with Brad when he's not killing?

He's in flight. Eyes closed in the sun, shirt off, in a field. Arms stretched out, joyously. Very young. And he's flying, grinning in the light.

The opposite of maneuver warfare, the archaic old standard, is the war of attrition: the siege. Force applied over time to a single location. Maneuver warfare is force applied to all locations, engagement of the enemy on as many fronts as possible; derangement of his senses; dislocation of his ability to make conscious choices. Men of war, in both cases, represent the force applied. But the thing about men that makes them different from weapons is this: the action can be anything. We are nuclear. Men aren't weapons at all: that force exists whether or not it's weaponized. Remove the war, remove the possibility of warfare, and you still have action, inside. And it builds, and builds: carry a baby, apply that force to easing the torments of war. Walk alongside the civilian enemy. Encino Man and Casey Kasem and Godfather are so close to it, and they'll never see it, because they think like weapons. Think like a hammer, everything looks like a nail.

But what do you do if you're Brad? If you have all that action inside, and they won't let you spend it on war, what will you be? What happens when you go home? What do you do, in the sunlight, too tweaked to rest and too blocked off to fight? Take flight.

"Over all stations, be advised: Sergeant Colbert is wings level. Can somebody clear him hot?"

Ray asks if Evan gave him drugs, and he says no, but he did: "Asked him what he would be if he wasn't a Marine." Take away the war and the action remains. "Oh my God, he wants to be a ballerina? That's my fuckin' dream!" shouts Ray. Brad screams, joyfully, and stays aloft. "You fucking rock," somebody says quietly. He carries them all, for a moment, on his wings. He glides down to a soft landing, on his knees, before Evan and Ray: "Better now." It is.

Brad pulls, with much flourish and drama, a mysterious bag from the back of the truck. "There's something I've been keeping from you. I wasn't sure we were gonna live to share this moment." He revels in it, and finally produces cans of Chef Boyardee. Needless to say, Ray screams like a bitch. "You deceiving, conniving, Hebrew motherfucker. How were you gonna keep this from your dearest pal Ray-Ray?" But Brad's not done. He looks Walt in the eye and pulls out a copy of *Juggs*, sending Ray's screams into the stratosphere. Brad tells Ray he'll have to share with Trombley, once he's done with it, and Ray laughs. "What? He'll kill her!" Trombley, trying desperately to play on their field, starts up again with his whole deal: "Eat, fuck, kill. All the same, right?" Ray agrees, but only if you're a fucking psycho. Evan asks about his girlfriend's picture, and they finally tell him about how she's been making the rounds. "She doesn't deserve you, man." Lilley and Espera arrive, and Espera hesitates to take his share: "Last time the white man gave my people something, it was blankets laced with typhoid." Brad asks if they can't just get along, and Espera takes the can.

Gabe asks Whopper Junior if he's got any Tabasco, and Evan points a finger. "Okay, there it is. You did just call him Whopper Junior. Now what the hell is that about?" Lilley explains what everybody else already knows: "They're sold at Burger King. Burger King? BK? Baby Killer. Trombley's our little Whopper Junior ever since he shot those shepherds." Ray, without looking at Walt, starts bugging Brad to produce more wonders: "Damn, Brad, what else you got hidden in the Humvee? A fat chick?" Espera's not distracted though, and pursues the BK thing: "Shoot some civilians, you get a reputation." Nobody looks at Walt. Except for Ray, with Beefaroni all over his face, serious through the mess he's made: "Walt. Walt. He didn't mean that. Walt." Ray's got the screwby down; it finally works. Walt breaks into the first smile he's worn since the murder. "You're a fuckin' messed up hick. You can't even eat ravioli!" Ray smiles, delighted by the fact that he finally pulled it off. "I'm *eating* ravioli."

"Gents, the final battle against Saddam's military began this morning when RCT-5 crossed the Diyala river. The final assault of Baghdad is under way. Now, some of you may have surmised that this is not a game for Marines in open Humvees, that while this great battle is being fought, you'd be sitting in a field holding your dicks. Or if you're in H&S Company, holding *our* dicks. This is a problem that's been gnawing at Godfather since Al Kut. And the solution was right in front of me the whole time. Gentlemen, the northern flank. Above Baghdad, we assume a significant Republican Guard presence, especially since it's this region that's the home to the Sunnis and Ba'athists. Now it turns out this had been weighing on the CG's mind when I went to meet with him last night. Chaos has committed all three regiments to the assault from the east here. There's a town called Baqubah about fifty klicks north of the city where an Iraqi mechanized Republican Guard division is unaccounted for, okay? Now this leaves Chaos's northern flank as tender as the virgin's thigh. Until I met with him, CG thought his only option was to peel off a mechanized battalion. As a good officer should, I gave him another option. Gentlemen, we are going to Baqubah. Expect morning orders within thirty mikes."

Eckloff arrives with a quick aside. "Sir, there's a situation. Despite our best efforts, they came up on our comms this morning. They know where we are, and they're less than two klicks from our perimeter. Sir, we could give them a tangential mission, maybe task them with guarding H&S..." Godfather realizes that "they" are not going anywhere and he now has to include "them" in his wonderful new plan. "Major, we can't unfuck this one. Gentlemen, one other thing: Delta Company will be with us." Patterson's grossed out and Casey Kasem, who frankly belongs with Delta, makes another ugly face. "The reservists have arrived."

Ray comes to get a donkey dick from Dirty Earl, in this case a radiator hose, and notices Kocher writing in a journal. "What, about how you're singlehandedly winning this war? That's the type of shit that Cody puts in his little diary." Kocher shakes his head. "Look, if they say we fought valiantly here, I want 'em to know we fought retarded." That's so sad, and so awesome. Ray points out that they've done some cool things, like the town and the airfield, and Kocher rolls his eyes. "Come on, Ray. I work for Captain America. You got Fick at least." One of the guys on Eric's truck notes that all they have to do is shoot Cap and everything will be fine, but Kocher

tells him to shove it. "You had your chances like everybody else and you haven't done it, so fuck you, man." Dirty notes the man himself approaching and Ray -- for whom just the presence of Captain America must be like sandpaper on the eyeballs -- scoots faster than he's ever moved. CA dispenses some meaningless approval and general bullshittery, and everybody indulges him. "Good. Good work."

Captain America wanders away, and Nate joins him. Without prologue, Captain America looks at Nate desperately and tries to explain himself. "Each man sees things differently in combat. Right now at any time, we could die. It's almost enough to make you lose your sanity. To remain calm and stay in a place where you think you will die, that too is the definition of insane. Nate, you have to become insane to survive in combat." Nate looks at him, trying to get inside, but there's no way in. he just stares at Captain America, and Captain America stares back, horribly lonely and afraid and guilty for getting all the accolades by fucking up. Trying to fly.

Brad notifies his team about the new mission, drawing in the dirt: link up with War Pig and the LAVs and take point for the Battalion. Brad explains that this is both good and bad news, in that they're only getting the heavy ass because they're going north of Baghdad, where all Saddam's people are from. "And they don't love us up there like they do down south." Everybody celebrates the opportunity to "fuck 'em where they live," per Trombley, and Brad draws out the magic line. "We'll be surrounded by friendlies until here... No American unit has gone past this line. A couple tried yesterday and got ambushed. This is bad guy country." He gets excited about moving out again; so much so that Espera calls him out for being moto. Before Brad can explain, not that he ever could, he notices some guy walking up that they all recognize, but whose name, this show being what it is, we will never know.

"Are we that desperate for cannon fodder that they're clearing out the sick, the lame, the crazy?" The guy grins at Brad and then basically is asked a litany of questions providing a pretext for him to relate a bunch of anecdotal information. This is one of many lazy things about this subpar episode, which is definitely the worst of the six we've seen. So without further ado, here's a digest version of what this random guy has shown up to tell us before disappearing again. He came up with Delta, who have been fucked by madness since day one; previously the guy was in a desk job and hasn't fought since Somalia, so he got back in the game except if he'd known it was Delta, he would not have, because it is a clusterfuck, they don't have any gear or food, they were pulling escort duty just to eat, and they have been doing stupid shit on a Trombley level like showing little kids porno magazines -- "show the little hajjis what we're fighting for," which is in this case, I guess, feminism -- thereby pissing off old Iraqi guys who yell about morals and not fucking up little kids with porn, and the old guy in question had an RPG, so then Delta blows up the entire hamlet, and Oliver North filmed the whole thing with a camera crew from Fox "like it was the turning point in the fucking war," which thematically it was but whatever, and the thing with Delta is that they are all LAPD cops and DEA agents and fucking Air Marshals and the like, reservists, and they're led by this Napoleon douche who is like a Corporal or some shit in Albuquerque PD who has cattle horns on his Humvee. All of which was interesting to hear about in the book,

but now just seems like a part of the book that made it onto the show without any effort being put into making the jump from text to screen so it just stayed text, which this annoying fucker is now screaming at us as quickly as possible. This episode is screwby because from a TV standpoint it contains some lazy-ass shit, but then also Ray brought Walt back to life, and Brad flew.

Whatever, moving on, I don't care. Encino Man notifies Nate that they can change out of the MOPPs they've been wearing the whole show and back into camo, and Nate comes toward our guys to relate the order, and Espera, awesomely, goes, "You can actually see it rolling downhill." Which as much as I hate thinking about Nate being stuck in the middle like that is actually one of the funniest lines. Everybody changes out, chattering excitedly, and we hear the following amusing exchange. "My balls smell like Jacks [Manimal]'s mouth!" *How do you know what his mouth smells like?* "Because my balls were in it!"

Driving. Evan points out that if they're out of their MOPP suits, then there aren't any WMDs, and if there aren't any WMDs, then WTF are they even doing there. It's like getting a phone call from the future! "I knew you were a fucking gay-ass liberal," Ray says hilariously. "You tried to pretend by invading Iraq with us, but I knew." Evan laughs, but he's serious. Trombley is not even into WMDs or justifying anything, and gets randomly savage and stupid and hateful, because that's what he does best. "The point is we get to kill people, you dumb fuck." Evan jumps a little bit. "What's the difference anyway, man? I mean, the war's almost over. We're just about done with this bitch," Ray says, noting the homeless refugees walking with the belongings on their backs: "Yeah, they're pretty much liberated around here..." Heh. Brad tells him to stay focused, and once again explains the whole magic line thing, just like in the scene five seconds ago, possibly verbatim. Sigh. "Hey Reporter, do you know what you're supposed to do if the Humvee gets hit by a mine? You're supposed to curl up like a bitch." Brad tells Trombley to stop being randomly awful, but no. Not after Evan pointed out that they're all idiots for being there. "You know how to curl up like a bitch, don't you, Reporter?"

That night, they're listening to BBC, which tells them Baghdad's coming down and they're not invited. Espera hopes to just stay under the radar. When they drive again, Brad speaks softly to himself. "Once more into the great good night. Cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of war." Good dialogue, but again, lazy scene: "Man, when I get home, I am gonna eat the fuck out of my girlfriend's pussy." Evan identifies the *Julius Caesar* quote and Trombley goes, "Shakespeare wrote that? About his girlfriend's pussy?" Which is funny and all, but basically a sitcom joke, because it cartoonizes Trombley in a way that isn't narratively plausible. Take out the pussy reference and it could be on *Everybody Loves Raymond*. Or hell, leave the pussy reference in, and it's *The New Adventures Of Old Christine*.

Massive explosions alert Ray to the fact that the LAVs ahead have crossed the magic line. Enemy contact on both sides of the road, rockets, mortars and machine guns." There's a big firefight that's all confusing, and poor Walt up on top with bullets whizzing by from every direction, and some random unrelated village that he swears

has muzzle flashes coming out of it, and finally Ray stops the truck. Evan's breaking hard. Captain America comes over comms, screeching crazily as usual: "Enemy! Enemy, both sides! Break!" Ray laughs aloud: "OMG, is he crying?" Brad swears he's not, but he comes back on: "We're gonna die if they don't get us out of here! *They sent us to die!*" Brad is forced to admit that Cap actually is crying at this point. They pull back and Nate tells them the LAVs are going to head back south. "Trombley, the LAVs will be coming up on our left. Do not engage. If you do, they'll schwack us." Of course, somebody engages, Walt's up there shouting, Marines firing on Marines, and of course it's Delta, and honestly the impression that I got was like they really are like this, all the time. Now, surely somewhere between First Recon and the reserve there are normal Marines, but the contrast is seriously highlighted right now between the two extremes. And of course, there's no comms with Delta, Ray says, because why even have radios on this show, ever. "I don't know, maybe the fucking retards will just run out of ammo."

Team One is out looking for the actual Iraqis involved in the firefight, the next day; it takes about three seconds before they come into heavy fire. Seconds after Brad and Trombley realize that they've started wearing blankets to fool their thermals, Alpha Company starts shooting because of Gabe's borrowed helmet. The assumption is that it's Delta, but really it was just a mistake. And Trombley's helpful contribution? "Everyone likes to shoot Mexicans, even Mexicans."

Back in the trucks, there's mortar fire coming in very, very close. Brad asks for permission to vamoose instead of just sitting there watching bad guys play *Battleship* with their bombs, getting closer and closer to actually taking out a Humvee or two, but no. They get to sit there "covering Alpha's assault," despite the fact that they can't actually do anything but wait to be exploded. "Whoa, Brad. Check out the retard casevacating lamb chops. Man, that's fucking intense when you think about it, homes. Here's this poor farmer who's out there in the middle..." Brad tells Ray to shut up, and they watch the fighting. And in Baghdad, the Marines are pulling down a giant statue of Saddam Hussein. "Fighting seems to have come to an end..." Brad, cockblocked again, tells Ray to turn off the radio. "Apparently, these motherfuckers up here don't listen to the BBC."

And back to the beginning of the episode for yet another take. Platoon Three's patrolling and looking at dead bodies, to the sound of Delta taking pictures with bodies and looting and shit, being disgusting. Eric finds a guy and tries to snatch him, find out what's going on, and they get him on the ground. One of the Delta guys points out that this is basically the first thing that's happened to them that involved actual fighting of the actual enemy and not perving out on little kids or shooting at other Marines, and just as he's thanking Eric, once again fucking Captain America comes running up, screaming for no reason, and stabs the ground over and over on either side of the dude's head, terrorizing him like an insane douchebag and suggesting that they film themselves slitting his throat. Luckily, more explosions distract everybody from this essential last straw in my five-episode relationship with Captain America, and the Delta guy is just disgusted. "You motherfuckers. I'm sorry I shook your hand. You abused that prisoner." But how do you even start to explain

the problem of Captain America? You don't. Especially not to Delta. So that's another mark on Kocher's conscience that doesn't even belong there.

A guy runs up and kisses Nate, all, "No Saddam! Come!" Ray laughs. "Looks like you won some hearts and minds, sir. And some tongue." Delta drives by with an Iraqi flag, holding it proudly up. Everybody's pretending they're in Baghdad and trying to turn this place into Baghdad through the power of imagination. "Yeah! I love killing people!" says one assface. A guy's begging for his life and Christeson tells him to fuck off: "You were waiting to kill us. You didn't put your weapon down." The guy points out that, while Godfather and Encino Man are pretty terrible, if you put your weapons down on the bad guy side, the police will come and beat you up. "Everybody under Saddam is silent. If he say we go to war with America, we say *good*. If he say we don't go to war with America, we say *good*." Because this scene/episode isn't full enough of talking heads without personality beyond a paragraph in their heads, dripping with meaning and pretension, another dude goes, "Shit yeah. We can't drop our weapons either." Nate tells them to untie the guy and give him some water: "I don't want any war crimes in the back of my truck." They explain to the guy that he's not going free -- which is what scares him, because he's not dead which means he didn't fight correctly which means he'll be punished -- and Q-Tip's all, "Negro, ain't no Saddam. Know what I mean? Ain't no Iraqi army. You ain't got a sergeant no more. Either we killed his ass already or shit he be running away faster than you. Feelin' me?" Because apparently this is the one Iraqi citizen who speaks wigger, the guy's like, "Gotcha, homie." Gunny Wynn explains that they're taking him to detention in Baghdad, and the guy almost cries with gratitude. "For free? I'm so happy. Thank you, thank you. I'm so happy." Yeah, because the one thing Americans can be counted on for is treating their prisoners well.

Back in Brad's Humvee, they have one more conversation about how the war is over but the people fighting it don't know that, and Ray starts singing, "Mommas, don't let your babies grow up to be cowboys," and Brad tells him no country music, and Ray says it's not country music, it's cowboy music, and Brad tells him there are no cowboys left.

Which is a waste of a perfectly beautiful Brad speech, but what else to expect from this shitty episode. Oh, I got it: over the end credits, instead of just random comms chatter, it's an obviously ADR'd "conversation" between Espera and Chaffin about how people should stop complaining about the racist and sexist talk on this show because it's just so totally real or whatever -- which I agree with, because you can't argue with gravity -- but also we shouldn't hate the actors or the Marines because blah blah blah everything we already knew. But like, the whole point of this show has been not apologizing, so what's actually offensive at this point is apologizing. Weak.

Next week: the show gets its balls back, hopefully, just in time to end, sadly.

